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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002401

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/BCLTV, S/CT, CA/OCS.
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: TRIPLE BOMBING IN FAR SOUTH, APRIL 3, 2005

REF: A. BANGKOK 2351

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2352

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alexander A. Arvizu. Reason 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The evening of April 3, three bombs exploded nearly simultaneously in the southern province of Songkhla, killing at least two and injuring scores of others. Two Americans were injured; their injuries, while serious and requiring hospitalization, are not life-threatening. Two of the bombs targeted the international airport and a Carrefour "superstore" retailer in Hat Yai City. The third exploded at a hotel in the nearby city of Songkhla. These bombings, which occurred just north of where most of the recent separatist violence has been centered (Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat), were direct attacks on highly visible public commercial symbols in the region. As such, they represent a significant development in the violence that continues to afflict southern Thailand. The Royal Thai government's (RTG) initial public reaction has been to downplay the attacks, but other officials have told us privately that the attacks are, in their view, evidence that the violence is spreading. On April 4, another explosion, in neighboring Yala province, injured six soldiers. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) On April 3, at approximately 8:30 p.m. local time, three bombs were detonated nearly simultaneously (within 20 minutes of each other) at three distinct locations in the southern province of Songkhla. At least two people died as a result of the bombings and scores were injured, including two American citizens. The first bomb reportedly was placed in a garbage can near the entrance to a Carrefour "superstore" retailer, part of the French-owned chain. The second bomb -- which killed two persons and injured the Amcits -- was apparently left in a bag near the airport information counter at the Hat Yai international airport. The third bomb was placed on a motorcycle parked at the Green World Palace Hotel in Songkhla City, where the regional police headquarters for the South is located. Asked about rumors that other explosive devices had been disarmed, RTG Police officials told the Embassy that no other bombs were found in Hat Yai or Songkhla City. The bomb in Songkhla City exploded not far from the residence of USG (DEA) personnel; at this point, we have no reason to believe the USG personnel were specifically targeted.

[1](#)3. (U) The RTG's initial reaction has been to downplay the attacks. Armed Forces Supreme Commander Chaisit Shinawatra, the cousin of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, made the incredible claim that the attacks in Songkhla province, "show that our measures are working in the three southernmost provinces," which border the province, i.e. that the bombers were forced to move North. Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Chidchai Vanasatidya convened an emergency meeting of top security officials at the National Security Council on April 4 to discuss the latest attacks. Following the meeting, Chidchai announced that security would be increased at airports, and intelligence efforts redoubled. Chidchai also claimed that a closed circuit video camera at the airport had captured the bomber placing the device and that the authorities were working to identify the culprit.

[1](#)4. (C) Despite the government's initial attempts to downplay the attacks, other officials warn they are indicative of spreading violence. Songkhla Governor Somporn Chibangyang told the Embassy that the attacks in his province occurred despite recent stepped up security measures. Somporn believes that these latest attacks signal that the violence, which had been largely contained to the three southernmost provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala, is spreading. Netr Chantharasami, a prominent local businessman and member of the newly established National Reconciliation Commission, concurred. Netr told the Embassy that the attacks demonstrated the RTG's failure to contain the violence to the deep south. Both Somporn and Netr predicted that the attacks in Hat Yai and Songkhla City, which serve as the commercial center for far southern Thailand, would have a negative impact on business investment and tourism for all of the 14 provinces that make up southern Thailand.

[1](#)5. (U) On April 4, another explosion was reported in neighboring Yala province at the Yala Vocational College.

This bomb went off in the parking lot of the college sports stadium during a school sports day festival. Six soldiers providing security for the festival were injured in the blast.

16. (C) COMMENT: These latest attacks strike us as a significant development in the violence in Thailand's far South. The attacks were against targets outside of the three southernmost provinces where most of the separatist violence to date has taken place. Two targets, the international airport and the Carrefour super-store -- both crowded on a Sunday evening -- are important symbolically for the region's economy. Songkhla City, which serves as the headquarters for the Police for southern Thailand, had no history of attacks prior to the April 3 hotel bombing.

17. (C) Songkhla province has not been entirely immune from the violence that has plagued its neighboring provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala. In August 1992 and again in April 2001, the Hat Yai railway station was bombed, with both attacks resulting in several deaths and dozens of injuries. However, Songkhla province has escaped much of the daily incidents of the current upsurge of violence that continued in the far south since January 2004. Provincial security officers had told Poloffs as recently as November 2004 that they believed that violence would one day reach the cities of Hat Yai and Songkhla. Their prediction has played out in Songkhla province in a terrible manner. END COMMENT
ARVIZU